



# NEWS FROM NOAA

## NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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### **NOAA RELEASES FIVE-YEAR CORAL REEF RESEARCH PLAN** *New Plan to Further Benefit Coral Reef Ecosystem Research*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released the NOAA Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Plan today, identifying priority research needs and guidance for coral reef research through 2011. The plan looks at key research objectives and long-term needs to enhance NOAA's understanding of coral reef ecosystems and provide guidance to coastal and ocean managers on regional research priorities to help preserve, sustain and restore coral reef ecosystems.

"NOAA has developed this research plan to guide the full suite of NOAA's coral reef ecosystem research capabilities, as well guiding management-driven research across U.S. coral reef regions," said Timothy Keeney, deputy assistant secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and co-chair of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. "By providing researchers and coastal and ocean managers with high-priority scientific information, they will be better equipped in their efforts to conserve, protect, restore and sustain coral reef ecosystems."

Coral reef ecosystems are highly valued for their biological, ecological, cultural and economic resources, as well as their aesthetic qualities. These ecosystems provide coastline protection, renewable resources, benefit fish populations, and support commercial and recreational activities.

"Research is the cornerstone on which to build and improve ecosystem-based management and resource management decisions," said Richard Spinrad, NOAA assistant administrator for oceanic and atmospheric research. "The Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Plan provides a planning tool for national and regional coral reef research and establishes an unprecedented NOAA-wide effort containing contributions from regional coral reef managers and researchers."

In the past few decades, competing demands on these ecosystems, including increased threats from natural and human stressors, have contributed to a significant decline in coral reef health worldwide. NOAA has identified research as a cross-cutting priority demonstrating that productive research is the cornerstone on which to build and improve ecosystem-based management.

Two earlier NOAA reports, *The State of Coral Reef Ecosystems of the United States and Pacific Freely Associated States: 2002* and *2005*, summarized the status and health of coral reef ecosystems throughout U.S. waters. Based on these status reports, the research plan outlines the national and regional research needed to address the many management challenges presented by current coral reef decline.

The research plan also builds on strategies identified in NOAA's Strategic Plan, NOAA's five- and 20-year Research Plan, the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs, the National Coral Reef Action Strategy, and the U.S. Ocean Action Plan.

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The Coral Ecosystem Research Plan is a product of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, which consists of NOAA Research, NOAA Ocean Service, NOAA Fisheries Service, and NOAA Satellite and Information Service. The plan covers all shallow-water coral reef ecosystems under the jurisdiction of the United States and is intended for resource managers, scientists, policy makers and the public.

A wide variety of experts provided direct input and reviewed the plan including representatives from NOAA; other federal, state, territorial, commonwealth, and local agencies; members of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force; fisheries management councils; coral reef managers; scientists, and other key stakeholders, as well as the public through a formal request for comments published in the Federal Register.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

Oceanic and Atmospheric Research: [www.oar.noaa.gov](http://www.oar.noaa.gov)

National Marine Fisheries Service: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

National Ocean Service: [www.nos.noaa.gov](http://www.nos.noaa.gov)

National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service: [www.nesdis.noaa.gov](http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov)

Coral Reef Conservation Program: [www.coralreef.noaa.gov](http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov)